



DEPARTMENT of the INTERIOR

news release

Fish and Wildlife Service

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**SECRETARY BABBITT ANNOUNCES REFUGE ADDITIONS AND
NEARLY \$11 MILLION IN GRANTS FOR WETLANDS PROJECTS**

Additions to 10 national wildlife refuges and grants for 21 projects to protect and improve wetlands in Canada, Mexico, and the United States have been approved by the Migratory Bird Conservation Commission, Secretary of Interior Bruce Babbitt announced today.

"These projects will help restore critical watersheds or ecosystems in North America," Secretary Babbitt said, as he opened his first meeting as chairman on March 9. "Migratory birds are extraordinary indicators of the condition of the lands we live on. We must do a better job of protecting them and the wetlands and tropical forests upon which they depend."

The Cabinet-level Commission approved expansion of 10 refuges by 17,331 acres and expenditures of \$10,740,000 from the North American Wetlands Conservation Fund grants to public and private agencies to restore, enhance, and acquire some 70,000 acres of important migratory bird habitat on the North American continent.

Babbitt noted that the projects to improve wetlands on private lands and national wildlife refuges will have multiple benefits including local economic stimulus and increasing long-term projects for birdwatching, fishing, and other wildlife-oriented recreation.

Major actions include expansion of the Bear River Migratory Bird Refuge (NWR) in Utah by 1,650 acres, addition of 5,014 acres of the second most important waterfowl production area in Colorado to the Arapaho NWR, and adding 2,958 acres of key wintering waterfowl habitat on the Texas Gulf Coast to the San Bernard NWR.

Major grants from the North American Wetlands Conservation Fund, matched two-to-one by partnership dollars, include

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\$1,844,424 for wetlands and water quality work in 26 southwestern counties of the Minnesota River Watershed; \$1,800,000 to continue the multi-year project of restoring nationally and internationally significant wetlands in the Cheyenne Bottoms in central Kansas; and \$1,400,000 to restore 1,800 acres of wetlands in the Four Rivers Wildlife Area in southeastern Missouri.

In Canada, a grant of \$173,000, together with an equal match, will be used in British Columbia in a multi-year project to restore wetland habitat that supports immense numbers of shorebirds, raptors, bald eagles, and waterfowl.

In Mexico, \$341,672 will be matched to restore coastal wetlands that are critically important as wintering habitat for migratory birds, to complete a management plan, and to begin an environmental education effort.

Funds to acquire land for the National Wildlife Refuge System come from the sale of the Migratory Bird Hunting and Conservation Stamps, called Duck Stamps, that must be purchased by all waterfowl hunters 16 years and older, refuge entrance fees, and other wildlife-related accounts. All of the refuge additions support the goals of the North American Waterfowl Management Plan, an international agreement with Canada and Mexico to restore waterfowl populations through wetland protection and improvement.

Funding for the North American Wetlands Conservation Fund comes from appropriations and wildlife-related interest and fines. Projects are recommended to the Commission by a nine-member, public and private council established by legislation and appointed by the Secretary of the Interior.

Members of the Migratory Bird Conservation Commission in addition to Secretary Babbitt include Secretary of Agriculture Mike Espy, Environmental Protection Agency Administrator Carol Browner, U.S. Senators Thad Cochran of Mississippi and David Pryor of Arkansas, and Representative John Dingell of Michigan.

Editor's Note: A complete State-by-State listing of refuge additions and wetland conservation projects follows.

Refuge Additions:

Arkansas - Overflow NWR, 98 acres
 California - Grasslands Management Area, 2,652 acres
 Colorado - Arapaho NWR 5,014 acres
 Louisiana - Lacassine NWR 640 acres
 New Jersey - E.B. Forsythe NWR 98 acres
 Texas - Aransas NWR 1,974 acres; Anahuac NWR 1,972 acres; San Bernard NWR 2,958 acres
 Utah - Bear River Migratory Bird Refuge 1,650 acres
 Virginia - Back Bay NWR 275 acres

North American Wetlands Conservation Fund

	<u>Project</u>	<u>Acres</u>	<u>Grant</u>
<u>United States</u>			
Arkansas	Falcon Bottoms	878	\$422,135
California	Consumnes River	1,100	260,000
	Upper Butte Basin	1,632	250,000
Iowa	Iowa Great Lakes	720	450,000
Kansas	Cheyenne Bottoms	16,587	1,800,000
	Playa Lakes	560	100,000
Kentucky	Obion Creek	1,870	1,000,937
Maryland	Blackwater NWR	2,298	1,080,000
Minnesota	MN River Watershed	8,391	1,897,150
Missouri	Four Rivers	2,470	1,400,000
Mississippi	MS Delta	10,000	200,000
North Carolina	Mackay Island NWR	1,109	350,000
North Dakota	Maple River	5,335	66,000
South Dakota	Private Lands	10,000	262,675
	Stratford Slough	800	106,250
Tennessee	Fullen	830	300,000
	Mustin Bottom	2,387	360,000

Canada

British Columbia	Pacific Coast JV	173,000
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Mexico

Yucatan, Tamaulipas	341,672
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